



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony of Delegate Dana Jones
Before the Environment and Transportation Committee**

**In Support of HB87
Vehicle Laws—School Bus Safety—Occupant Capacity**

January 14, 2021, 1:00pm

Chair Barve, Vice-Chair Stein, and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

I come before you today to reintroduce a bill that has been important to many in Annapolis & Anne Arundel County- and throughout the state, a bill that offers a simple solution to a dangerous problem.

Many of our students are forced to ride on overcrowded school buses that don't have enough seats for all students, with some students even having to stand in the aisle or sit on the floor of the bus. This goes against the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's recommendation that all school bus passengers be seated while a school bus is in motion.

This bill initially came about when parents in my district reached out to my predecessor, Delegate Alice Cain, about this problem after their concerns were dismissed by school district officials that used state law as the rationale for overcrowded buses. As you all know well, the session was cut short - not giving this common-sense piece of legislation a chance to get across the finish line.

News reports from prior to the pandemic have confirmed that this is a problem in several counties.¹

¹ Montgomery

County <https://bethesdamagazine.com/bethesda-beat/schools/parents-sound-alarms-about-crowded-school-buses/>

Baltimore County

<https://www.baltimoresun.com/education/bs-md-bus-driver-shortage-20190919-siey6q4sqne5xnvynzou5oc6b4-story.html>

Anne Arundel County

<https://www.fox5dc.com/video/602228>

A 2019 performance audit of Anne Arundel County Public Schools² found the school system is not managing its transportation services efficiently and suggested that overcrowded busses could be solved through the application of routing software they already own.

We all can agree it is essential to secure the safety of all of our children. Students after a long day of school can easily become more rambunctious by the end of the day. Children crouched on the floor caused by too many kids on buses can only serve to distract drivers compounding this safety concern.

This bill includes an amendment made last year, which would allow for the limit of students to temporarily exceed seating capacity in cases of emergency as long as it is corrected in a reasonable amount of time.

I respectfully urge a favorable report on this simple, commonsense bill that would keep our children safe as they travel to and from school.

Delegate Dana Jones



² [AACPS Performance Audit.pdf](#)